

536 ARRIVAL CLOSE TO PANAMA.

March in a champion country, where the grass groweth, not only in great lengths as the knot grass groweth in many places, but to such height, that ijie inhabitants are fain to burn it thrice in the year, that it may be able to feed the cattle, of which they have thousands.

For it is a kind of grass with a stalk, as big as a great wheaten reed, which hath a blade issuing from the top of it, on which though the cattle feed, yet it groweth every day higher, until the top be too high for an ox to reach. Then the inhabitants are wont to put fire to it, for the space of five or six miles together; which notwithstanding after it is thus burnt, within three days, springeth up fresh like green corn. Such is the great fruitfulness of the soil: by reason of the evenness of the day and night, and the rich dews which fall every morning.

In these three last days' march in the champion, as we past over the hills, we might see Panama five or six times a day; and the last day (14th February) we saw the ships riding in the road.

But after that we were come within a day's journey of Panama, our Captain (understanding by the Cimaroons that the Dames of Panama are wont to send forth hunters and fowlers for taking of sundry dainty fowl, which the land yieldeth; by whom if we marched not very heedfully, we might be descried) caused all his company to march out of all ordinary way, and that with as great heed, silence, and secrecy, as possibly they might, to the grove (which was agreed on four days before) lying within a league of Panama, where we might be safely undiscovered near the highway, that leadeth from thence to Nombre de Dios.

Thence we sent a chosen Cimaron, one that had served a master in Panama before time, in such apparel as the Negroes of Panama do use to wear, to be our espial, to go into the town, to learn the certain night, and time of the night, when the carriers laded the Treasure from the King's Treasure House to Nombre de Dios. For they are wont to take their journey from Panama to Venta Cruz, which is six leagues, ever by night; because the country is all champion, and consequently by day very hot. But from Venta Cruz to Nombre de Dios as oft as they travel by land with their treasure, they travel always by day and not by night,